



Sanctuary

“Sanctuary” was penned in honor of the National Park Service Centennial by Cape Cod National Seashore Ranger Jenna B. Sammartino. Musical composer David Cohen was commissioned to create a composition of the same name that blended words and music. The piece was performed by the Cape Symphony Orchestra as the finale in a celebratory concert on August 25, 2016.

On August 25, 1916 these words were written into history: “Be it enacted by...the United States of America in Congress assembled, that there is hereby created... the National Park Service...[It] shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations... which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same... as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

(The Organic Act)

Distill these words, extract their essence, and they become a single declaration – of Sanctuary. A statement proclaiming, that as a nation, we will:

Provide our unique lands and waters – protection.

Provide our precious flora and fauna – refuge.

And offer our country’s people – renewal.

And to this day, Sanctuary is what our national parks afford –

To the grizzly bear and the roseate tern.

To the redwood and the lady slipper.

To the wearied souls whose eyes ache for the green of the forest, whose ears strain for the sound of the sea, whose hearts yearn for the salve of Nature. For, as naturalist John Muir said, “Everyone needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike.”

Today we celebrate our national parks, and the *vision* behind them. And we celebrate *our* park: Cape Cod National Seashore – a place that embodies the very heart of the national parks ideal. Here, we are custodians of history, caretakers of nature. Here, truly, is a place of Sanctuary.

- ~ This is the place where the Wampanoag – People of the First Light – witnessed the ripples off the bow of the Mayflower as she dropped anchor on their Narrow Land... ripples that would come to saturate every fiber of this continent.
- ~ This is a place where threatened shorebirds take refuge and hatch their young on expanses of beach, a place that protects acres of glistening salt marsh and some of the world’s last remaining heathland habitat.

(over)

- ~ This is the place that provided the very first welcome – a beacon of light, beamed from the lantern room of the Highland Lighthouse across 18 nautical miles of Atlantic Ocean – to ships full of weary immigrants coming home to America.
- ~ This is a place where Nature retains the right to take its course, and a place where, in the words of Henry David Thoreau, the Ocean “is landlord as well as sea-lord.”

Yes, this is a “place” – with enough unique and compelling components to warrant its status as a jewel in the crown of the national park system.

But the people who come here, the people who live here... do not describe this place by physical attributes alone. Because Cape Cod is much more than a place. It is a feeling. It is Sanctuary.

- ~ Found: by author Henry Beston, who came here to help mend his tattered soul after witnessing the savagery of World War I.
- ~ Captured: in the brushstrokes of artist Edward Hopper in his paintings of the Truro dunes.
- ~ Experienced: by the runners, drawn to the Cape, who stood barefoot and quiet at the edge of the sea after the chaos of the Boston Marathon bombings.
- ~ Inspiring: Pulitzer Prize-winning local poet Mary Oliver to pen the lines,
“I am in love with Ocean
...I will live
nowhere except here, by Ocean, trusting
equally in all the blast and welcome
of her sorrowless, salt self.”

This is what our national parks offer. *This* is why they are beloved, not just by citizens of our own country, but by the world. *This* is why we now turn, all of us together, toward the next hundred years. Because it is not enough to simply appreciate our national parks; we must all accept the honor of responsibility for them. With gratitude for those who shepherded the parks through their first century, and with consideration for the generations to come, we must all exercise stewardship in the most active sense of the word.

Because these places... they crack our hearts wide open, and they heal us... all at once.
Within their boundaries we are boundless.

From their very presence alone, we obtain inspiration, encouragement, reminders of who we are and where we came from and what is truly important.

They connect us – to the world we’re part of and to each other.

Our national parks are -literally- our *common ground*.

NPS/Jenna B. Sammartino